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Chairperson: Ms. Gittens-Joseph ..... (Trinidad and Tobago)

Contents

Agenda item 103: Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family *(continued)*

Agenda item 104: Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons *(continued)*

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 103: Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family *(continued)* (A/55/3, A/55/139-E/2000/93, A/55/167 and A/55/257-S/2000/766; A/C.3/55/L.2; E/2000/9)

Agenda item 104: Follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons *(continued)* (A/55/167 and A/55/257-S/2000/766)

1. **Mr. Al-Suwadi** (Bahrain) said that the concept of social development – which applied to all members of society, including youth, older persons and the disabled – was the development of the capacity of the individual, and efforts must therefore be redoubled to attain that goal.

2. The new theories of development, focusing on human capital, were based on forward-looking studies carried out in dozens of countries which had demonstrated that the participation of human capital in development was 64 per cent, as compared with physical capital (16 per cent) and environmental capital (20 per cent). In the light of those theories, which were a reaction to the absence of a human dimension in the classical theories, priority was given to health, education, occupational training and investment in technological research and development, all essential to increased productivity.

3. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, Bahrain had been working to establish a State governed by the rule of law and catering to the needs of citizens in the fields of education, health, well-being and prosperity, as basic human rights and priorities. All those activities had enabled Bahrain to achieve a prominent place in the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) reports on human development during the past four years.

4. The national legislation considered the family to be the core of society, based on religion, moral values and respect for all rights and pursuant to the Islamic shariah, which respected and strengthened the family, since the welfare of the family benefited the whole of society. Consequently, the Government provided a range of services to families, such as campaigns to combat illiteracy or to provide information on women's health, particularly sexual and reproductive health, as a legitimate right.

5. Older persons occupied a very prominent place in Bahraini society, in accordance with the precepts of Islam. Social institutions had been formed to provide them with all kinds of services in the context of general policies for older persons, in addition to specific programmes and projects which guaranteed them a decent life and personal and social stability. In addition, national associations contributed, within the limits of their resources, through similar activities.

6. In paragraph 26 of the report entitled "2000 Report on the World Social Situation: overview" (E/2000/9) it was stated that, globally, various factors had contributed to an increase in the incidence of disability, including illness, accident and armed conflict; and that, although in some quarters disability was still seen as a stigma, in general it was viewed as something to be coped with or to be overcome. In that context, Bahrain had intensified its efforts to provide for the disabled in public institutions with a view to their rehabilitation. In addition, research on disability was being conducted and numerous cooperation projects were being implemented involving the Government and local, regional and international institutions. The Department of Social Rehabilitation, within the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, was responsible for matters relating to the disabled. In civil society the disabled were the concern of the Association for Maternal and Infant Care, the Bahrain International Centre for Mobility and the Association for Friendship with the Disabled. There was also a Higher National Commission on the Disabled, founded in 1984.

7. The social-development agencies provided the necessary attention to older persons, the disabled, orphans and children from broken homes, as well as assistance to families and individuals facing difficulties. The achievements gave an incentive to continue working towards new goals, which would call for bold, determined efforts.

8. **Mr. Pratap Malla** (Nepal) said that the leaders assembled at the 1995 World Summit for Social Development had agreed to foster social development through a set of goals: promoting full employment; eradicating absolute poverty; providing the opportunity for a decent life for all, especially older persons, the disabled and women; and providing universal and equitable access to education and primary health care. The Summit had acknowledged that high economic growth in itself was not sufficient to eradicate poverty

and promote social development; the quality of growth and distributive justice also mattered. The Programme of Action adopted at the Summit had recommended measures to reduce inequalities within and among countries. Earlier in 2000, a conference had been held in Geneva to review and assess the progress made since the Summit.

9. In keeping with the goals set by the Summit, the United Nations had been giving high priority to social development, and the Commission for Social Development had played an active role in that regard. However, it was very disheartening to note that the world continued to suffer from the ills of poverty and social disintegration. A large segment of the population, especially in developing countries, was still mired in poverty; five years after the Summit, poverty and inequality continued to grow, and prospects that it could be reversed remained poor. Unemployment and underemployment were increasing and working conditions were declining in many parts of the world.

10. It was urgent to eradicate poverty as the most fundamental means of achieving social development. That required not only sustained political will and decisive national action, but also international support and cooperation. The United Nations, through its specialized agencies, should increase its support for national poverty-reduction programmes. Moreover, developed countries should provide developing countries with the appropriate technologies and the resources to advance economic growth throughout the world. Given the close relationship between employment and poverty reduction, the former should be increased as a way of promoting social progress and removing social exclusion.

11. Nepal, as a least developed country, had taken a proactive approach to social development. In its current ninth plan it had adopted poverty alleviation throughout the country as its main objective. It had also sought to increase employment through human-resources development, with emphasis on expansion of educational and health facilities, and had implemented programmes to mobilize local resources, create and strengthen social-welfare centres and enhance public awareness regarding the protection of women.

12. The 1999 International Year of Older Persons had raised awareness of the profound implications of demographic change throughout the world; it had increased understanding of the problem of ageing and recognition of older persons as productive members of society. They were the embodiment of social values, tradition and culture, and merited respect and economic and social protection. Nepal, which had initiated a modest assistance programme for the disabled, widows and senior citizens, had also taken substantial measures to protect the rights of old, helpless and disabled citizens, providing them with essential services. It hoped that the Second World Assembly on Ageing, to be organized by the Government of Spain in April 2002, would permit the formulation of global projects relating to ageing.

13. In order to achieve the essential development of youth as a majority of a nation's population, they must be actively involved in decision-making and in the design and implementation of development programmes. Nepal had therefore assigned priority to mobilizing them in order to stimulate the nation's socio-economic development, and to involving the private sector and civil society in the country's social development. Nepal supported the statement made by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77.

14. **Ms. Samah** (Algeria) said that, on the threshold of the third millennium, a new era was dawning in which technology and telecommunications would facilitate the exchange of information and knowledge and would bring individuals and nations closer together. However, the existing gap between North and South, rich and poor, strong and weak, could increase if the international community did not face decisively the grave problems that had arisen in recent years and, most recently, at the Millennium Summit: globalization and its negative repercussions for many developing countries and poverty and its consequences, such as literacy, diseases, marginalization and even exclusion. In order to avert a catastrophe in the coming century, it was essential that the international community should maintain the impetus generated by the Summit. To that end, it should mobilize and implement all necessary means, especially funds, to achieve those objectives, as well as the objectives enunciated at special sessions of the General Assembly to follow up the conferences and summits sponsored by the United Nations during the 1990s. The recommendations, decisions and resolutions adopted would be effective for people living in subhuman conditions only if all-round, concerted efforts were made to implement them.

15. A country's social development unquestionably depended on its economic development, but that in turn depended on numerous external factors that were known but beyond its control, especially in a rapidly evolving world in which, unless the State gave them particular attention, the weak would remain excluded. Algeria therefore attached great importance to the family as the basis of society, the teacher of new generations and the crucible in which inter-generational and supportive bonds were forged. The State provided protection and support to families, particularly the most disadvantaged, through specific measures and programmes carried out by such institutions as the Ministry of Solidarity and the National Council of the Family.

16. Although ageing did not yet constitute an acute problem, since it affected only 6 per cent of the population, the National Programme of Action on Ageing, which incorporated the recommendations of the International Plan of Action, had initiated a social policy in behalf of older persons. Although the primary responsibility for older persons rested with the public authorities and the family, the role of the private sector and of associations was no less important. The partnership between the State and the associations, including women's associations, made it possible to devise programmes to promote the participation of older persons in the life of society.

17. The commemoration of the 1999 International Year of Older Persons had enabled the international community to become truly aware of the problem of ageing in the coming century, which especially affected the populations of industrialized countries but had also intensified in the developing countries, where it would continue to worsen. The international community had concluded that measures were needed to enable society to face the problem and better integrate older persons.

18. To that end the General Assembly, aware of the incidence of longevity in developing countries, had emphasized that the links between ageing and development and the needs and prospects of the developing countries should be given a prominent place in discussions at the Second World Assembly on Ageing, to be held in April 2002. Algeria would actively participate in the preparations, with a view to building tolerant, harmonious and inclusive societies in which all sectors of the population would play a role and make a valuable contribution.

19. **Mr. Moniaga** (Indonesia) associated his delegation with the statement delivered on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda items 103 and 104. The five-year review of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and the Millennium Summit of the General Assembly had called attention to the obstacles to promoting social development and protecting vulnerable groups. The international community must work together in promoting social development for all peoples in all countries. While the responsibility for implementing various programmes and plans of action of international conferences rested with Governments, an enabling environment could be created only by working together. It was therefore of some concern that, despite years of rhetorical support, since 1995 the incidence of poverty had increased in many countries. Many developing countries were worse off today than they had been at the time of the Social Summit five years earlier. That was certainly true of Indonesia, which, having gone through a severe financial crisis in recent years, had seen much of its social-development successes erased. Indonesia accepted its responsibility and was working within its means to restore those social services which had been lost and to move its social-development programme forward. It was confident that the current economic situation would be resolved and that the country would return to the path of economic and social development. If anything, the economic crisis had pointed to underlying weaknesses that Indonesia was now dealing with.

20. The report entitled "2000 Report on the World Social Situation: overview" (E/2000/9) offered a comprehensive picture of prevailing global conditions and posed some interesting questions that would be debated for years to come. The question of cultural homogeneity and the problems it posed was most interesting, as was the relationship between national sovereignty and globalization, which no doubt would command attention over the coming years as State sovereignty continued to be challenged from many directions.

21. An equally important issue raised in the report was the changing nature of health care in developing countries and the new problems which they must confront in the coming years. In some regions the problem of HIV/AIDS had reached catastrophic levels which, coupled with the added health risks of a life in poverty and the ageing of the population, would

constitute new challenges for health-care systems and social and economic infrastructure.

22. Indonesia considered that the momentum generated by the International Year of Older Persons must be maintained, since increasing longevity and declining birth rates posed numerous issues that must be addressed in order meet the basic needs of society and ensure the well-being of older persons. It was estimated that 56 per cent of the world's older persons would reside in the Asia and Pacific region by the year 2025. Indonesia therefore remained committed to the International Plan of Action on Ageing as the foundation for its activities. The Second World Assembly, to be held in 2002, would provide an updated approach based on the new global situation. His delegation welcomed the work being undertaken by the Technical Committee as part of the preparations for that Assembly. The forthcoming session of the Commission for Social Development should also provide some useful input.

23. Indonesia attached importance to ensuring that the revised Plan of Action gave particular attention to the needs of older persons in developing countries. He reaffirmed his Government's determination to address the needs of all vulnerable groups in Indonesia, taking what measures were within its capacity. It hoped that that effort would meet with continued support from the international community and from donor countries.

24. **Mr. Rasheed** (Singapore) said it was paradoxical that, at the dawn of a new millennium, it was necessary to face the issue of ageing. Demographic developments would have consequences beyond national borders. If the developed countries, as engines of growth for the world economy, were concerned about falling populations and increasing costs of care for the aged, there was all the more reason to worry about the adverse effects for the rest of the world.

25. At the national level, developed countries would have to reform their systems in order to cope with ageing populations, and developing countries would have to prepare for a similar future. Internationally, there would be a substantial gap between ageing developed countries and youthful developing countries for some decades. Among the possible consequences were increased immigration and social change, and even a change in international debtor-creditor roles. However, all changes brought possibilities of both improvement and deterioration. The differential rate of ageing between "old" and "young" countries could become a fertile source of cooperation instead of a bed of hostility.

26. Singapore was keen to learn from the experiences of developed countries. Its basic philosophy with regard to the aged was to encourage personal responsibility. It was constantly trying to improve its compulsory savings scheme, the Central Provident Fund, which citizens drew upon for retirement and health care. Since a rising standard of living was accompanied by an escalation of costs, Singaporeans were being encouraged to participate in additional commercial savings plans to boost retirement income.

27. Among Singapore's root traditions, the family had always played a central role in the care of its members. The old had continued relevance to society with their wealth of knowledge and experience. Singapore had therefore enacted legislation to ensure that the family would continue as the primary caregiver of the aged, through tax relief and housing incentives to encourage children to live near their elderly parents.

28. A high-level inter-ministerial committee on older persons had recently established a basic policy framework in such areas as health, employment, housing, financial security and social cohesion; it incorporated desired outcomes, and public consultation was an important feature of the process. The committee would oversee the continued effectiveness of policies and programmes.

29. Singapore had also put in place a comprehensive network of community-based support services and programmes, which included senior citizens' clubs, volunteer programmes, befriender services, meals, home help, hotlines, counselling, mutual-help schemes, day-care facilities and "golden manpower centres" to provide information, training and job placement for older persons.

30. Both justice and common interest required that society should care for its ageing members. It was not merely a matter of humanity; the elderly represented a vital link with history and tradition, and an important source of cultural identity and social stability at a time of eroding cultural distinctions and traditions. In the long run, the successful integration of the elderly gave society greater resilience.

31. **Ms. Ibrahim Ahmed** (Sudan) said it was difficult to separate economic and social development from

peace and stability, and emphasized that the international community had assumed commitments flowing from the Copenhagen Programme of Action adopted at the World Summit for Social Development. Nevertheless, despite efforts to eliminate poverty and counter the negative effects of globalization, the agreed goals had not yet been attained.

32. Although social development was the responsibility of each country, it also required political will at the international level. The concerted efforts of the international community were needed in order to attain such goals as the earmarking of 0.7 per cent of the gross domestic product for official development assistance and alleviation of the debt burden and its harmful effects on social development. There was a need to apply the debt-reduction initiative for the heavily indebted poor countries and to improve the situation of the least developed countries. In that context, it was necessary to reform the international economic system in order to render it more transparent and stable, and to make the Bretton Woods institutions more democratic. That would enable them to respond better to the financing needs of the developing countries, especially in the context of globalization, if they were to strengthen their institutional capacity and human resources.

33. The least developed countries in particular continued to encounter problems of access to markets. With the integration of the world economy and the multilateral trading system, the low level of competitiveness of those countries must be borne in mind, since the access of their products to developed markets encountered transport problems, customs barriers and technical provisions that impeded international trade. Accordingly, there was need for a study to evaluate the consequences for the developing countries of the application of the results of the Uruguay round of multilateral trade negotiations and to determine what benefits they could derive from the Uruguay round and what support they needed to that end.

34. Furthermore, poverty could not be eradicated unless infrastructural deficiencies were overcome, especially in Africa. Her delegation therefore urged the international community to mobilize the necessary funds to improve infrastructure and thereby create a more favourable climate for the economic development of all countries. That would enable the right to development to be achieved as part of the exercise of human rights. In addition, it was necessary to end unilateral economic sanctions and to realize the right of access to medicines and food sufficiency, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions. Furthermore, endemic diseases such as malaria and AIDS posed a serious threat to the peoples of the developing countries, especially in Africa. For all those reasons, genuine and effective international cooperation was needed.

35. The Sudan, which had made significant headway in social development, stressed the need to reflect on ways to achieve the noble and human-development objectives laid down by the international community, as well as to ensure the progress, security and stability of all nations, bearing in mind their social and cultural characteristics.

36. **Ms. Toe** (Burkina Faso) endorsed the statement made by Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77. With regard to the follow-up to the International Year of Older Persons, she said that emphasis should be placed on improving the situation of older persons, and commended the Government of Spain for its generous offer to host the Second World Assembly on Ageing in 2002.

37. The Secretary-General's report entitled "2000 Report on the World Social Situation: overview" (E/2000/9) indicated that, despite efforts, many problems persisted and had become even more serious. They included poverty, especially in Africa, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, the escalation of conflicts, environmental degradation and the situation of women. Although the latter had somewhat improved in recent years, it still faced obstacles, especially in health and education. It should therefore be noted that the international community had endorsed the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development with a view to creating a better society for all. Burkina Faso, despite its modest resources, had introduced a medium- and long-term programme aimed at an annual per-capita increase in gross domestic product of 3 per cent between 2000 and 2002 and between 4 and 5 per cent from 2003; a reduction of poverty from 45 to 30 per cent by the year 2015; and an increase in life expectancy of at least 10 years. To that end, it had set objectives in four priority sectors: education, in which the policy to the year 2010 consisted in making access to basic education universal and improving its quality; health, with decentralization of services and greater

accessibility of medicines and basic training; improved access to drinking water by designating zones containing a waterpoint for every 300 inhabitants and a maximum carrying distance of 300 metres; and agriculture and livestock breeding, in which a strategy had been adopted for sustainable growth, together with an operational plan for its implementation.

38. She emphasized that, for the full attainment of those objectives in the struggle against poverty in the medium and long term, a set of basic principles had been established. They included reorientation of the role of the State; sustainable use of natural resources; promotion of a new partnership with donors; proper management of public affairs; incorporation of a gender perspective and a reduction of regional disparities; and a nationwide strategy based on accelerated growth in conditions of equity, access of the poor to basic social services and the expansion of job opportunities and income-generating activities for the poor. Although the success of those measures would depend largely on the Government's capacity to implement them, Burkina Faso reiterated its appeal to development partners to provide the additional resources needed for sustainable development.

39. Her delegation expressed its appreciation to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO), which, in the context of a meeting held in Ouagadougou on the promotion of productive jobs and social integration, had launched a programme of studies on job-creating investment with a view to reducing poverty in the country. Those studies – a commendable initiative that should be emulated in other countries – would provide a wealth of information on public and private investment.

40. **Mr. Bhatti** (Pakistan), associating his delegation with the statement made by Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77, said that the world social situation remained far from satisfactory because of the prevalence of poverty. In the light of the galloping income disparities between the richest and poorest, the emerging digital divide and the many millions who remained mired in abject poverty or were victims of hunger and disease, the eradication of poverty would remain the major focus of the main conferences on social development. The Millennium Summit had identified the year 2015 as the target date to halve the number of people in extreme poverty. Sustained economic growth, which helped in creating and expanding sustainable livelihoods, particularly in developing countries, was a prerequisite in that regard.

41. The 1999 International Year of Older Persons had helped in creating broader awareness of the incipient demographic revolution and the challenges which the ageing of the population would pose in the new century. Projections suggested that by the year 2050 people aged over 60 would outnumber children under 15 for the first time in human history. Most of the developing countries were ill-prepared to face the economic and social implications of the ageing of the population. The United Nations, developed countries and the relevant intergovernmental organizations could help them in research and collection of data on prevailing trends and emerging issues on ageing to prepare for that challenge. Pakistan welcomed the invitation by the Government of Spain to host the Second World Assembly on Ageing and hoped that the momentum generated by the International Year would make the preparatory process more enriching and productive. Moreover, in most parts of the world women constituted the majority of older persons. They had fewer resources and more health problems associated with old age. The revised International Plan of Action must be a gender-sensitive document to ensure older women's full integration into the life of their communities and societies.

42. Pakistan attached great importance to the institution of the family. A stable and nurturing family contributed to forging social cohesion and harmony. The traditional multi-generational family of Pakistani society helped in strengthening inter-generational bonds among family members. It provided effective support for the young, the disabled and the elderly.

43. Pakistan placed special emphasis on the education and skills training of disabled persons, one of the most vulnerable segments of society. The Ministry of Special Education had established specialized educational and training institutes for disabled persons in various parts of the country to prepare them for participation in development. Furthermore, the Government had reserved quotas for disabled persons in public-sector employment, so as to integrate them into the country's economic and social life.

44. Pakistan regarded education as the main vehicle for the empowerment of people. Recently it had launched an ambitious education-reform programme

with a budgetary outlay of 81 billion Pakistani rupees, under which 200,000 teachers were being recruited, with special emphasis on English, mathematics and computer science. The programme also envisaged strengthening the partnership between public and private institutions to promote universal access to education with emphasis on rural areas. It had set the target of 99 per cent enrolment for boys and 93 per cent for girls at the elementary level by the end of the first decade of the new century. Clearly, empowerment through education provided the short route to poverty eradication and social development.

45. **Ms. Fleming** (World Bank) said that, in the context of its commitment to building an equitable world, the Bank understood the need for a holistic approach to development built equally on economic dimensions, dealt with by the Second Committee, and social dimensions, the concern of the Third. Thus, the Bank was fully committed to working with the Third Committee also.

46. Since true sustainable development must span the spectrum of the life cycle, the voices of youth and older people must be incorporated into the dialogue, and their special needs must be provided for. There was much wisdom to be drawn from older citizens, but they were also much at risk, and there was a growing urgency for countries to attend to their care and financial support. The proportion of older people in populations around the world had grown substantially, placing great strain on public social-insurance programmes.

47. Since 1990 the Bank had been increasing its lending and technical-assistance activities in the area of pension reform, and was engaged in pension-system reform in 30 countries. It had contributed to pension reform in Latvia, Poland, Hungary, Argentina, Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Uruguay and Bolivia, and had provided technical assistance to China, the Russian Federation, Turkey, Thailand, the Republic of Korea, Kenya, Morocco and Egypt.

48. Although the world had witnessed the current violent protests in Prague during the annual meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the President of the World Bank, James Wolfensohn, had acknowledged the value of questioning, and had said that the Bank embraced the passion of a new generation rising to fight poverty. The Bank had long been dedicated to supporting the needs of youth and children, particularly through education and health programmes. Programmes that directly benefited children had accounted for 40 per cent of its lending for human-development activities, representing a total of about $10 billion since 1990. The Bank was the single largest external source of finance for education in the developing world. In the past 35 years, it had loaned $24 billion for education, supporting 600 projects in more than 100 countries. The Bank was placing greater emphasis on primary education, and was working with its member countries to open the doors to those previously excluded from education, particularly girls, the rural poor and linguistic minorities. The Bank's initiatives included 70 projects that incorporated special components targeting girls, particularly in South Asia, and lending for girls' education for a total of over $3 billion between 1996 and 1999; a broad strategy designed to combat childhood diseases and improve child health worldwide; and collaboration with Governments and other partners, especially in Latin America, to find new ways of addressing youth in danger.

49. Among the Bank partnerships aimed at bettering the world for children was the project FRESH (Focusing Resources on Effective School Health), in collaboration with WHO, UNICEF, UNESCO, Education International and Save the Children. Moreover, following the World Education Forum in Dakar, the Bank was hosting a joint secretariat for agencies seeking to promote the Forum's core goals designed to accelerate progress on education for all. Also, in partnership with UNICEF and ILO, the Bank had established an international advisory panel on child labour.

50. At the Millennium Summit, the Member States had reaffirmed the Secretary-General's call for a youth-policy network. The Bank was committed to contributing to that important work, in partnership with the United Nations system, with special focus on youth employment.

51. It was more urgent than ever, in a globalizing world, to learn to listen, share, communicate and enter into true dialogue, and to assume a real commitment to all countries of the world, developed and developing. Accordingly, the World Bank undertook to work with the Third Committee in a spirit of cooperation and dialogue as a partner for equitable and sustainable development.

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.